

**DRAFT Principles for AGB's Statement on Board Responsibility for the Oversight of
College Completion and Attainment**

Among the outcomes of AGB's Lumina-funded project on board engagement in student success includes an AGB statement focused on board responsibility for the oversight of college completion and attainment.

Overview: Graduating students with critical competencies and knowledge is a core mission of higher education. To respond effectively to institutional, state, and national completion and attainment challenges, colleges and universities are called to graduate students of increasing diversity in greater numbers. (*Completion* is the percentage of students who finish the academic program they began, while *attainment* refers both to the totality of educational capital in the nation and the share of the adult population with a degree or credential.)

Oversight of student learning and completion is fundamental to the legal and fiduciary duties of boards. Gone are the days of a sink or swim mentality on campuses - when getting from freshman orientation to graduation was solely the responsibility of students. Colleges and universities must commit to ensuring the success of all students they matriculate.

1. Governing bodies of public and independent colleges and universities must ensure that institutional and board policies are in place to enable students to complete their degrees.

- Boards must develop an understanding of policies and practices that advance (or impede) student learning and college completion. This relates to board fiduciary duties to support student success and ensure the institution's mission.
- Boards must understand the institution's strategic plan in relationship to national, state, and regional needs for college graduates and an educated citizenry; this is not solely a priority of public institutions, but a priority for all institutions.
- Boards must designate the appropriate board committee to monitor appropriate metrics related to completion while recognizing that completion may well cut across the work of several board committees—standing or ad hoc.
- Given its relationship to mission, student learning outcomes, accreditation, revenue, and reputation, college completion is an institutional risk factor. Boards must commit to completion goals and monitoring progress toward student success. Recognizing the limitations of federal data related to part-time students, boards should request institutional data that illustrates student retention, degree completion, time to degree, student borrowing, and demographics.

- 2. Boards must hold presidents and senior administrators accountable for progress toward mutually agreed upon goals for college completion and the time required for students to earn their degrees and credentials.**
 - Boards should charge the president and chief academic officer with ensuring that appropriate metrics and data about students and completion are gathered and shared with the board.
 - Achieving institutional completion goals requires the collaborative engagement of all institution stakeholders. Governing boards, in collaboration with institutional leaders, administrators, and faculty must ensure that goals and initiatives related to college completion are focal points of institutional strategic plans, including academic, student support, and financial priorities.
- 3. Boards must ensure that institutional policies reflect the challenges of balancing revenue needs with student access, educational quality, and affordability.**
 - Oversight of institutional finances uniquely positions boards to ensure that budgets and tuition pricing reflect commitments to access, affordability, and completion goals, emphasizing smart investments in services that promote student success, i.e. innovative academic and financial aid advising services and strategies, along with tutoring and mentoring opportunities.
 - Boards must also invest in strategies that better enable institutional leaders to track the progress of students and plan for successful and timely completion of degrees and credentials.
- 4. Because student preparedness and college readiness impact college completion, boards must ensure that institutional policies reflect a commitment to collaborations with community partners such as K-12 leaders, high school counselors, and transfer-partner colleges.**
 - Boards must ensure that institutional collaborations and partnerships are in place to support student learning and success.
 - Boards should advocate for effective articulation and transfer agreements that create clear pathways and minimize the loss of credits for students who transfer to or from their institution.

About the development of Draft Principles

These draft principles relating to an AGB Statement on Board Responsibility for the Oversight of College Completion and Attainment were developed based on survey data from board members and trustees, and the project's Advisory Council. They continue to be a work in progress.